EML Accent

Fall 12

Volume 11

Mansfield University
English & Modern Languages Newsletter

Ireland: Study Abroad through ISEP

—Caitlin Johnson

For over ten years, I waited and planned for an opportunity to study abroad, and my chance finally came in the spring of 2012. I applied through ISEP to go to the University of Ulster in Coleraine, Ireland, for a semester, and they accepted me. Hands down, this was one of the best experiences of my life. Because of Mansfield's work with ISEP, I was able to take unique courses of my choice in a country I have always wanted to travel to.

At Mansfield, I am a Secondary English Education major, and I chose to apply to the campus in Colaraine

(Continued on page 4)

Contributions:

In Memory of Bruce Barton.....3
Ireland: Study Abroad through ISEP.....1
Opportunities and Doors.....1
The Chair's Corner 2
What's Your Most Memorable 4

News:

Faculty Accomplishments.....5
Sigma Tau Delta News.....4
Student News.....2

Opportunities and Open Doors

—Daisy Jelliff-Bennett

This summer I heard about an internship at HAVEN, our county's domestic violence and sexual assault center. I had never thought about an internship before but because of my Women's Studies courses I was intrigued about an opportunity to see how a non-profit organization who helps primarily women worked. So I got my resumé updated and applied for the position, not knowing what the competition would be like or if I even had a chance. I didn't even know if I really wanted the position, but something told me I should try. About a week later I had an interview. I came prepared, with an extra copy of my resumé and application in a tidy little folder. My interview went well and I felt even more inspired after learning about this local non-profit agency and everything that they do, which includes counseling for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, advocacy in times of need, emergency temporary housing, and legal assistance to name a few things. I left that day hoping more than ever that I would get the opportunity to work with them. Sure enough, I was notified later that day that HAVEN was offering me their fall internship. I had no idea what other opportunities would open up for me, but I knew that internships had a way of doing that. During my time as an intern I got to know HAVEN employees, did office work, helped with outreach events, and started my eighty hours of training necessary to work with clients. My favorite part was getting to be out in the community, discussing why places like HAVEN exist and how it benefits our area. I attended the Gabrielle Ford presentation in September on MU's campus and got to meet the acclaimed speaker who had a

(Continued on page 8)

Please, send news, announcements, and contributions to: lpifer@mansfield.edu

The Chair's Corner

—Tom Murphy

Stop me if you have heard me tell this story before. Of course, if you have heard it, I am not the one who will stop, you will, but when you do, I will fall silent. Thus do readers and writers depend on each other.

Lately, I have been involved in recruiting new students, encouraging them to major in English and Spanish at Mansfield University. Of course, a frequent question that comes up is "What can I do with an English or Spanish major?" In this case "do" means "get a job." I give them the list and tell them about what some of our graduates are doing. But I have also been thinking of the value of these majors on a more fundamental level when it comes to working.

I have been unemployed twice in my adult life, and each occurrence says something about what it means to major in English or another language. It may, however, say as much about the kind of person who chooses to major in a discipline so focused on products of the imagination.

The first time I was unemployed, fresh out of graduate school, I had had a teaching job, but it lasted only a year. Jobs were scarce and I was lucky to get that one year appointment. After it ended, I got a job working on the railroad. This was not so strange since I came from a railroad family, but I ended up in labor relations, about which I knew very little. They wanted someone to help write and revise labor agreements, and they thought I could help with the sentence structure and grammar. My real talent, however, turned out to be more valuable. Once I became familiar with the labor agreements and how they worked, I was able to imagine how things could be different, and then critique my imaginary world. Does that sound familiar, thinking about the implications of imaginative texts?

I was promoted and transferred four times, and each time I would imagine ways to do things differently. When I took over as a regional manager of labor relations, I had a problem: the people in my offices were used to being evaluated based on how well they resolved complaints. I wanted them to prevent complaints, and while it was easy to count up complaints and determine how many were settled and what it cost, it was harder to measure effectiveness at preventing them. What I ultimately did was ask my subordinates to tell stories, to write 300 to 500 word essays about how they had made things better. This, too, should sound familiar. Thus we were able to document what had been done, and I had stories to tell when someone asked what my offices had contributed.

The second time I became unemployed was when I decided, despite my success on the railroad, that I did not want to continue. So my family (my wife also studied English) and I imagined another option, a crazy one. We would move to the country, we would grow much of our own food, I would write and try to get some work teaching, and we would live simply. So we bought an old farm house in Tioga County, sold our house outside of Philadelphia, I quit my

(Continued on page 8)

Student news

On 10/18/12, **Dr. Washington** took students from his **ENG 2209 and ENG 3352 Shakespeare classes** to a production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Keystone Theater in Towanda, PA. A professional theater group, The National Players, performed the play, which was sponsored by the Bradford County Regional Arts Council. Our students asked the cast several excellent questions during the "Meet the Actors" Q&A session after the performance.

Christina Rinnert attended this year's EAPSU conference to deliver a paper, "The Ladies Have It: The Significance of Names in *The Last Hotel for Women*," and receive her award as MU's Outstanding English Major, 2012. Dr. Washington introduced Christina to the audience at the award ceremony and listed her many accomplishments as our Outstanding English Major.

On October 13, 2012, three English majors, **Amanda Cino, Jordan Hallock**, and **Christina Rinnert**, presented papers at the Sigma Tau Delta Conference at Shepherd University in West Virginia. Amanda's paper was entitled, "Discovering Symbols and Identity in *Their Eyes Were Watching God,"* Jordan's paper was *"*Father and Farther: Alexie's 'epicenter' in *Smoke Signals* and *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven,"* and Chris delivered her paper, *"*The Ladies Have It: The Significance of Names in *The Last Hotel for Women."*

In fond memory of...

MOON

In the woods I walk through
on some bright nights,
the moon is ground light
attaching shadow to shadow,

but in the corridors
of my father's chemo ward,
it showed up again
and again as a child.

A four-year-old traveled
by the open door
of Dad's room
each treatment, riding
the wheeled feet of his I.V. unit,
hand on the pole
and leaning out,
like a captain from his mast,
bald head sheltered
in a purple-lettered gray and orange

stocking cap that would strike
the Queer Eye guys blind,
that Dad had brought in
by the dozen from his
rough-hewn rural golf club.

The boy waved. "Hey, sunshine,"
Dad said, then threw up
as they opened the port
in his chest to pump in
a few more days.
And the moon is Dad's face, too,
that last good-bye, puffed yet
familiar. Bending to embrace
him, I, in blue collar blasphemy,
kissed his cheek.

The moon's dark eyes can glow.
The moon's oh of a mouth can
clench, struggling to hold in place
all this love. God help me

to accept whatever way
the light at the end
of any long walk
leads us home.

Bruce Barton (1953-2012)

FOR THIS ISSUE OF *EML ACCENT*, WE ASKED ENGLISH AND MODERN LANGUAGES FACULTY:

"WHAT WAS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE READING EXPERIENCE?"

More the poetry than the wine

—Judith Sornberger

My first teaching job was at the Nebraska State Penitentiary. In one course I planned to teach Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," a poem sequence that I had always admired. I hadn't read the poem for years and needed to prepare for my class the next day, but I was reeling from a break-up (this was pre-Bruce Barton) and didn't feel like I could concentrate. My friend Barb called and said, "Pour yourself a glass of wine and sit down and read that poem." I poured a glass of red wine and began reading the poem aloud in my living room. As I continued to read, I began to feel that Whitman was there with me, not "under [my] bootsoles" but right there with me on the couch. I kept reading, and as I read (and sipped) the long, rhythmic lines of the poem began to feel like a dance between me and Walt. (By now we were on a first name basis.) I think it was more the poetry than the wine that intoxicated me that night, that invoked the poet, drew him to my living room and made me feel positively giddy. I looked forward to bringing Walt with me to the prison the next morning, believing that Walt's poetry could free my students' spirits as it had freed me from sadness.

Reading *Justine* in Afghanistan

—Linda Rashidi

As an idealistic Peace Corps Volunteer in the 1960s, in a faraway place that nobody at that time had ever heard of, I discovered both language and literature. The pure delight of speaking a foreign language in its own milieu, of engaging people in their own tongue—indeed, of that sinking into a culture that is only possible when one is absorbed into its very midst—captured me as nothing else had before or has since.

It may seem strange that it was out of this idealistic, youthful experience of being a part of an oral culture that I also discovered literature, but that is precisely what happened. In those early, heady days of Sargent Shriver's Peace Corps, we volunteers were sent to

(Continued on page 5)

Ireland: Study Abroad through ISEP

(Continued from page 1)

for its excellent English program. While I was there, I took three classes, which are the equivalent of five classes at Mansfield. I enrolled in "Angels, Madwomen, and Whores: Nineteenth Century Women's Writing," "Shakespeare in Depth," and "Reading Ireland in the 1990s: Fiction, Poetry, Drama." These were my top three choices because they fit a Mansfield requirement, were not offered at Mansfield, or were specific to Ireland. The classes were organized into two hours of lecture and one hour of seminar, all of which were completed within one day. This was something I had to get used to – sitting in class for three hours on Monday was far different from one hour on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in ways both good and bad. My professors were all incredible teachers and mentors. They challenged me to do some of my best work, and they

(Continued on page 6)

Sigma Tau Delta

Mansfield's local chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honor society, offers high-achieving students an opportunity to participate in academic, extracurricular, and community service endeavors that enrich the students in a variety of ways. Membership includes opportunities to apply for scholarships, attend and present work at conferences, and publish work in the organization's scholarly and creative journals. In order to qualify for membership, students must be enrolled at Mansfield as an English major, an English minor, or a Creative Writing minor. They must also achieve a 3.3 grade point average and have completed at least three semesters of college. Each fall and spring, Dr. Kristin Sanner, the society's faculty advisor, contacts eligible students and invites them to join.

For more information, contact Dr. Sanner at:

ksanner@mansfield.edu

Faculty Accomplishments

Poems & Plays magazine has nominated **Dr. Bruce Barton's** poem "Morning Tracks" for a Push-cart Prize.

Dr. William Keeth published his article "El rol de la traducción en *Las moradas*" in volume 38.75 of the *Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana* (2012).

Dr. Lynn Pifer published a review, "Is There Any Help for *The Help*?" which appears in the spring 2012 issue of *Making Connections: a Journal for Teachers of Cultural Diversity.* In November, Dr. Pifer earned her probationary black belt in Tai Ji from U.S.A. Masters Academy in Canandaigua, NY.

Dr. Linda Rashidi presented "The *Black Book* as Starter Novel" at The Lawrence Durrell Centenary Conference at London Goodenough College and the British Library, June 13-16, 2012.

Dr. John Ulrich presented his paper, "Carlyle's Chartism and the Politics of the (In)Articulate," at the Thomas Carlyle Conference hosted by the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, in July 2012. The full-length essay version of his paper will be published in a special issue of *Studies in the Literary Imagination* next year. His commentary piece, "English Program Assessment and the Institutional Context," will appear in the forthcoming issue of the journal *Pedagogy* (volume 13, issue 1), and his book review of *Thomas Carlyle Resartus: Reappraising Carlyle's Contribution to the Philosophy of History, Political Theory, and Cultural Criticism*, edited by Paul Kerry and Marylu Hill, will appear in the forthcoming issue of *Victorian Studies* (vol. 54, issue 4). Just before Halloween, MU's Dennis Miller interviewed Dr. Ulrich about the history and meaning of zombies in popular culture. The interview is now a blog article called *Why Zombies Rule* on the *Huffington Post* website.

"What was your most memorable reading experience?"

(Continued from page 4)

our assignments (in Afghanistan, anyway) with two prized possessions: a shiny, new three-speed black Raleigh bicycle (the envy of every other of the thousands of commuter cyclists who circled the mountain daily) and a book locker. This latter was a small cardboard bookcase that contained 100 paperbacks, everything from Dr. Spock to Plato. Each locker's contents varied, but the one I inherited included a slim book called *Justine* by an author I had never hear of—Lawrence Durrell.

Before my first major trip out of Kabul, north to Kunduz and Mazar-i-Sharif, I browsed the bookcase for reading material for the road and chose *Justine* mostly for the exotic cover and jacket blurb. In Kunduz, I bought a small, tattered piece of carpet, a prayer rug. And then we headed across the unmarked desert, six to a taxi, landing five hours later in the historic border area of ancient Balkh. It was August, and Independence Day celebrations were in progress, but by then I was hooked on *Justine*. All I wanted to do was sit on my prayer rug and absorb the images of Alexandria (After all, Alexander had also gone through the very place where I sat, with his only wife, Roxanne, a daughter of the Hindu Kush). While my fellow-travelers saw the sights and sipped tea with dignitaries, I read aloud Durrell's poetic prose, sinking into the melody of its language. The story held my interest, but there was something more, a subtle undercurrent of words and sounds that mesmerized me. For the first time, literature took on a new meaning; the fullness of its potential to communicate startled me.

A Family Affair: Racing through Harry Potter

—Lynn Pifer

Most of my reading experiences are solitary affairs. If they are particularly good experiences, I inflict them on others by talking about them or adding the works to a future course syllabus. Having children meant I could read aloud to my girls, (or listen to my husband read aloud – no one reads the heffalump chapter of *Winnie the Pooh* better) just as my parents and older brothers once read to me. By the time my eldest was ready for Harry Potter, however, she was ready to read it by herself. She and I took turns reading books one through six, and, to our horror, we realized that book

(Continued on page 6)

"WHAT WAS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE READING EXPERIENCE?"

(Continued from page 5)

seven was finally due to hit the shelves while we would be away visiting Aunt Julie in Manhattan.

We needn't have worried. Julie took us to the biggest Barnes and Nobles we'd ever seen, and we snagged a copy and started reading right there in the store. When we got back to our hotel room, my lovely and usually loving child insisted on having the book all to herself. But I could stay awake longer than she could, and so, each night I snuck *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows* out from under her pillow and read until I could no longer keep my eyes open. The rest of the family insisted that we leave the hotel room during the day, but for the two or three nights it took to get through the book, there were two racing bookmarks keeping our places. One morning, my husband, who can stay up later than any of us, announced that he'd read the end already, and that Harry Potter *dies*. This little bit of Dad humor was not appreciated; he should have stuck to heffalump jokes.

John Hancock's *Lord of the Flies*

—Bill Keeth

John Hancock started the first day of my fifth grade class by recognizing that he experienced an extra degree of enjoyment when he signed documents, yet stressed that he was in fact not the first person to sign the *Declaration of Independence*. By mid- semester, he confirmed that this would be no everyday class and he no ordinary teacher. Without warning, Mr. Hancock announced a week long experiment in self-government accompanied by his self-imposed classroom absence. Essentially, we were given a package of assignments and corresponding goals and then left to fend for ourselves, unmonitored. How far would we get in a week of self-paced education? This, indeed, was the very circumstance in which I began reading Edgar Rice Burroughs's *The Mad King*. I was assigned a couple of chapters as a minimal goal, finishing the book as an ultimate goal. And so, somewhere in that room, which many times resembled the worst of William Golding's marooned student island, I entered the world of the chivalrous Barney Custer. Although admittedly I didn't reach the end goal until sometime later, I did learn something significant: reading was "as" if not "more" exciting than even the most exaggerated classroom wilds.

(Continued on page 7)

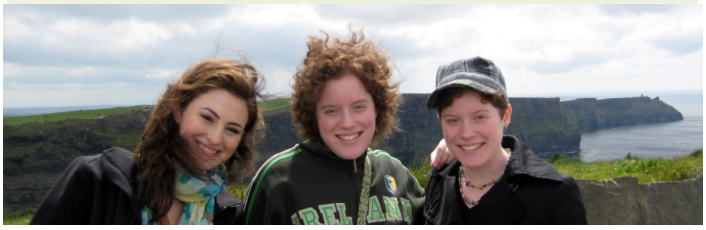
Ireland: Study Abroad through ISEP

(Continued from page 4)

helped me get over the differences between American schools and Irish schools.

Some of my best experiences in Ireland, however, were outside of school. Because my three classes each met on one day, I had long weekends. One thing Ireland taught me was to prioritize my work. If I got my work done during the week, I could go anywhere I wanted over my long weekends, and I did. Almost every weekend, I went someplace new. Coleraine is in Northern Ireland and is very close to the northeastern coast. Much of my exploration was along the Giant's Causeway: a stunning coastline, which includes far more than the hexagonal rock formations you will find in pictures online. I also made time to visit Dublin, which was an easy five-hour train ride away. I even had the opportunity to see my favorite band from home – Enter The Haggis – perform in Skerries, a small town just outside of Dublin. Arguably, the best part of my stay in Ireland was my final two weeks during which I traveled around the whole of Ireland with my sister and my cousin. When they arrived, the sun came out, and it did not rain once during out travels. This is very strange for Irish weather, and we utilized every minute of it.

I did all this and more during my stay, sometimes alone and sometimes with friends with whom I stay in touch. To be honest, I am glad to be home, but I miss Coleraine, and I would go back in a heartbeat if given the chance. Studying abroad is an adventure everyone should take – it opens your eyes to new cultures and educations. My only advice is this: never study abroad purely for the classes or purely for the travel because the experience would be incomplete. You must both expect to learn and to immerse yourself in a fascinating culture. Take classes that are not offered at every other university, and explore as much as you can. I will never forget my wonderful time in Coleraine, Ireland, and I strongly suggest study abroad to anyone interested in world cultures and travel.



Sigma Tau Delta News

—Chris Rinnert

Mansfield's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, Mu Xi, has been incredibly busy gathering books, having bake sales, applying to STD scholarships, and submitting papers to the International Conference (to be held in Portland, Oregon this year) as well as submitting papers to other conferences. This year our members have proven themselves to be superior fund-raisers.

We gathered, boxed, and shipped 525 books to Better World Books during our spring book drive. For that we owe the majority of our gratitude to the Grant Science Center professors and staff who, because of their move, decided to purge their bookshelves, making us the beneficiaries of a windfall!

A special thank you to Dr. Michael Chester, Associate Professor, Chemistry and Physics, for helping spread the word about our book drive and Better World Books. This sizable donation placed our small chapter Number Four on Better World Books/Sigma Tau Delta Campus Drives for the 2011-2012 academic year which is an amazing feat considering that there are large, nationally known campuses that participate in the book drive. This is an enormous accomplishment, especially since we are one of the smallest chapters in Sigma Tau Delta. This fall our chapter's members, led by our Vice President, Jordan Hallock and members Marta Knapp, Amanda Cino, and Stephani Williams, managed to dig up another 31 boxes of books to send to Better World Books so we are on our way to another record-breaking year!

We also had a bake sale that was planned for one day but we had so many donated snacks that it carried over to a second day. The sale was very successful thanks to the hard work and organization efforts of members Courtney Wark and Rachel Sterling. We also want to thank all of the students, staff, and professors who donated items to the bake sale or purchased refreshments.

Congratulations to our two newest members, Courtney Wark and Caitlin Johnson. There are also several students who have applied for scholarships through STD and others who have submitted papers for the international conference in March of 2013. We anticipate having representation from our chapter at the conference based on the high caliber of

"What was your most memorable reading experience?"

(Continued from page 6)

My most memorable experience with reading

—Louise Sullivan-Blum

I was nineteen. It was a Saturday afternoon and I was curled up in an armchair by the window on the fourth floor of the college library, immersed in my book. It was *Absalom, Absalom* by William Faulkner, and I was reading it for an English class. It was my first experience with Faulkner. In high school, I had fallen in love with Hemingway, whom I discovered on my own in the mildewed hardcovers I bought for a quarter at library book sales. I was enamored of his short sentences, his terse descriptions. I wrote story after story in daggered prose, attempting to emulate his clippered speech, his manly nonchalance, though I have to admit that it wasn't working for me. But I kept on trying, laboring to curb my errant, wordy tongue, because I thought that this was how you wrote a book, and writing a book was the only thing I had ever truly wanted in my life. I'd spent my youth imagining the novel I would write one day: the feel of it in my hands, the smell of its pages, the letters of my name, stamped in gold on the binding for the rest of time. I wanted my book on the shelves in the library, the place where I had spent my childhood, working my way through the stacks, alphabetically, author by author, world by world.

Sunlight streamed through the windows, bathing everything it touched in an ambient glow. Faulkner's writing mesmerized me like an opiate, page after page of prose that pulled me deeper and deeper into a plot that spiraled on and on. His sentences rambled on like trains, every subject a hundred clauses from its object, long, long strings of words that wrapped themselves around me, fused with the brilliant rays of light that illuminated the room, obliterating Hemingway and his suddenly puerile concerns like a nuclear blast.

I don't remember the words; I barely remember the plot. What I remember is the experience of that quiet afternoon: the sudden knowledge, absolute as truth, that I would be a writer, that I was called to it as if by God.

I would write a book. This was Faulkner's gift to me.

The Chair's Corner

(Continued from page 2)

job, and we moved here. The life that has grown out of that story is certainly some of my best work

Part of living is imagining your story and telling it to yourself. That way, when the right events appear before you, you know to step into them. In imagining your life and then critically analyzing what you have created, you become the author of a possible life; enacting that life you become the reader bringing it into existence. You harvest the energy of the interdependence between writer and reader and use it to take some control. It is a powerful tool, one we cultivate when we study literature.

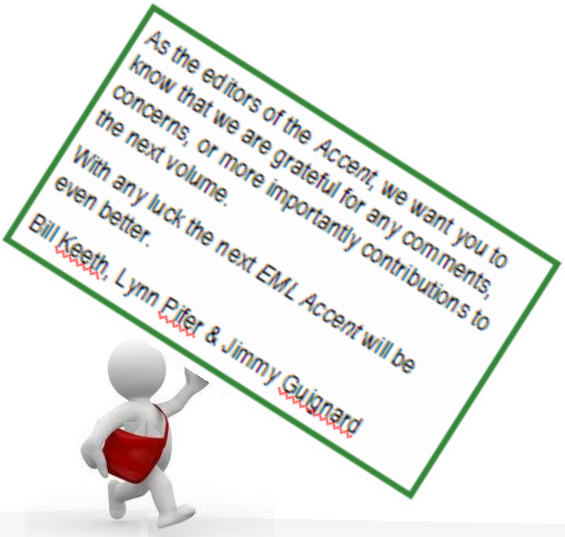
Opportunities and Open Doors

(Continued from page 1)

lot to say on the subject of bullying. She had been through so much and had the courage to talk to us and many other campuses about the effects of long term violence. I had my internship for about a month before I was offered the position of Outreach Coordinator. Now I get to talk to people within the community, raise awareness about domestic violence and sexual assault, coordinate outreach events, and help lead our new youth organization, RYOT against Violence, which encourages young adults to not accept violence and to make changes in their communities and schools. During the month of October, which was Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I worked with other staff to encourage community members to learn more about the epidemic and to wear purple to support the cause. Some of MU's faculty even got involved and wore purple to help us raise awareness. Not only am I thankful to HAVEN for the opportunities I have been given, but I'm proud of the work I'm doing. This all came from an internship I wasn't even sure I wanted, but I took a chance that ended up opening doors for me. It's amazing that a last minute decision to apply for an internship turned into a career path that I would never have thought of otherwise. I hope I can inspire more students to reach for opportunities and take chances; you never know where an open door will lead.

Autumn Symbol: Arachne

Pallas's attention turned to Arachne, said to be this god's equal in weaving. Art, not birth had made Arachne famous in every Lydian city. Even the water spirits would rise to watch her weave. And, taking disguise as an old lady, Pallas entreated Arachne to limit her boasts to that of the greatest of mortals. But, as competition and Pallas's ire would soon prove, Arachne's art bettered even that of this god.


As the editors of the Accent, we want you to know that we are grateful for any comments, concerns, or more importantly contributions to the next volume.
With any luck the next EML Accent will be even better.
Bill Keeth, Lynn Pifer & Jimmy Guignard